



Earth First!

Action Update

No 21 ^{30p}

October '95

'En ar hugain or divedd!'

SHUT WHATLEY QUARRY!

Mass Action 3/4 December

At the EFI gathering in Lancashire, it was decided to go for a huge national hit on Amey Roadstone Corporation's (ARC) Whatley Quarry in the Mendip Hills, Somerset. Come and see this massive hole created by the dark forces of industrial capitalism - and get your own back! This will be a totally memorable event, bringing in as many new people as possible, showing them the power of direct action.

Whatley Superquarry is one of EFI's longest running campaigns. ARC are one of the biggest quarriers in the South West. They are systematically digging up the Mendip Hills in Somerset (and many other places) to supply the roadstone for many of the roads that we are fighting. Stone from Whatley was used to build the road through Twyford Down. Actions against Whatley occurred throughout '92 and '93 as ARC aggressively fought to expand the quarry to double its existing size (it's already one of the largest holes in Europe). This campaign, in conjunction with many other groups - Friends of the Earth, local community groups, Druids etc., succeeded and ARC were refused permission in '94. But, ARC are now re-applying to widen and deepen this giant hole. We've not gone away and we'll win again - tough shit ARC! Local EFI and Freedom Network groups have already restarted actions. This national action is in solidarity with these groups.

We've got 2 months to pull this off. The action will be a joint effort between as many groups as possible. Start mobilising now in your own area, get as many people involved as possible and start organising transport. Please come prepared for an action & bring what you'd expect to find. There will be a full training and information day on Sunday 3rd December from midday, at a campsite near the quarry. This day will give you chance to decide your level of involvement. There will be a camping barn and also we'll make a big fire to keep warm! The action will be on Monday 4th December and we will shut down the superquarry. The camp will be alcohol and dog free. Being pissed in a dangerous quarry is not cool, for you or people relying on you.

Bring tents/marquees, waterproofs, food, musical instruments, vehicles and anything else which you think will make the day run more smoothly! Posters & leaflets are available to start photocopying & distributing (use the poster enclosed to start networking this action).

Contacts: 01935 825074, 01404 815729, 01635 521770, 01508 531636, 01222 383363, 01225 448556 (any other group who wish to be a contact get in touch).

THIRD BATTLE HEATS UP

Protesters against the A34 Newbury bypass are on the alert for bulldozers. The police have been put on stand-by from the 1st of October. There has been a lot of surveillance of the camps including the use of infra red goggles and a helicopter. Treehouses and walkways are now being set up. The camps need many more people. Contact the office to find out the camps location and if you have a phone, leave your number to receive details of actions. A recent route walk attracted over 100 local people. Donations / info: 01635 45544 or: Third Battle of Newbury, P.O. Box 5520, Newbury, RG14 7YW. Friends of the Earth have launched an interactive environmental campaign on the internet. <http://www.foe.co.uk/action/newbury/action.html>. They have also set up many public meetings around the area.

RECLAIM THE STREETS!

Manchester and Birmingham EFI are planning a spectacular Reclaim the Streets Party from 1.30pm - 6pm on Saturday October 21st. Meet at Albert Square, Manchester city centre. There'll be entertainment, music, food and a cafe. This is part of an ongoing campaign in Manchester against pollution. For further info call: 0161 232 1598 and not the number given in last months AUI. There will be a critical mass bike ride from Birmingham to Manchester on October 20th. Meet at 'Pushbikes', Allison St in the morning of the 20th. 0121 3785558 for further info/times. The convoy will be in Manchester on Saturday for the party.

The streets of Bath have been blocked every Saturday for the past two months by protesters - young and old, including councillors! A street blockade and party is planned in (grr) Bristol on October 28. Meet Arncliffe Arts Centre, Princes St. at 12.30pm. Bring banners, instruments etc. Contact Avon Gorge EFI on: 01225 448556 or 01225 314040.

A street reclamation in Streatham, South London went well recently despite police acting more quickly than usual. Next one was meant to be on October 2nd, but has been postponed. Contact: 0171 713 5874.

M66, GREATER MANCHESTER

The M66 extension intends to link the M62 at Middleton to the M63 near Stockport creating a motorway ring around Manchester. The route is directly through the narrow band of greenery between east Manchester and its surrounding towns. There are presently 3 sites occupied on the route in Daisy Nook Valley. The contract for the section of road threatening Daisy Nook has been deferred until next spring, so the campaign has even more time to mushroom.

On a recent action, the keys to a digger 'went missing'. Police arrested 3 people for stopping construction work, under anti trade union laws. As soon as they were gone, the keys reappeared and work continued. Protesters attempting to stop the digger were assaulted but, unlike the keys, the police failed to reappear.

Local residents have formed the basis of the campaign, but they need help... tree-sitters and squat-barricaders are needed now. They also need tarpaulins, ropes, CB

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ROADS ON THE ROCKS!

The Green Party and Friends of the Earth have launched a campaign to promote a Road Traffic Reduction Bill. It would lead to a national road strategy to reduce traffic by 10% by 2010. MPs are being lobbied to support the bill and there is a national petition as well as actions to pressurise the DoT. More details - contact The Green Party on 0171 272 4474. Some other groups are working to reduce car numbers by as many as they can find by tomorrow morning! The roads lobby, worried by rumours of £1 billion cuts to the roads budget, are busy pressing MPs to maintain or expand the scale of road building in the next budget. This would be an environmental and social disaster. Put the other side of the story, and write now to your MP at the House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA.

GIVE SHELL MORE HELL!

Over the last 30 years, Shell's oil extraction in the Niger Delta area of West Africa has devastated the ancestral lands of the Ogoni Tribe. The Nigerian military dictatorship which controls this region relies on Shell oil for almost half of its foreign exchange income, yet, Shell have washed their hands of all responsibility for the carnage. The Ogoni have suffered at the hands of the Nigerian army, trying to protect their farms and fishing villages. 'Give Shell Hell' are putting out a 'Call to Action'. Join their contact list on : 0181 960 9960

RAINBOW KEEPERS

The Rainbow Keepers - environmentalists in the former Soviet Union - have been holding a protest against the construction of a gas terminal on the eastern shores of the Black Sea. Activists from 15 cities in Russia, the Ukraine and Tadjikistan have set up their protest camps on the construction site. Peaceful negotiations broke down, resulting in security & police brutality. 4 activists were jailed for 5 days and went on hunger strike in an attempt to be recognised as political prisoners. Journalists were attacked and a vigilante group were encouraged by the oil company to assault the camp whilst the local authorities watched.

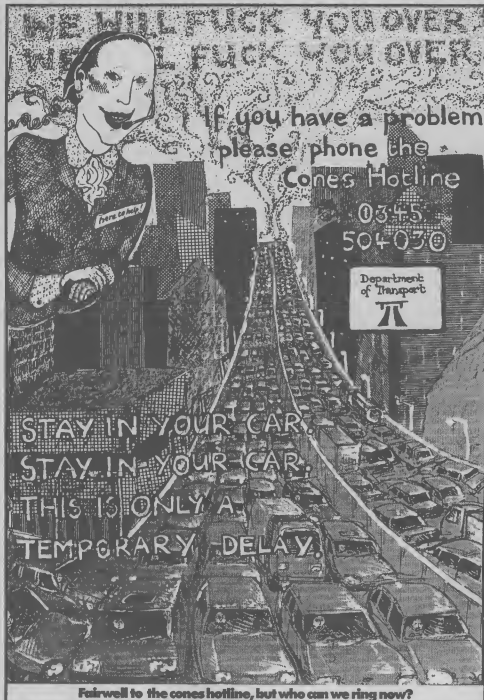
PRINCE BUTCHERS ANCIENT OAKS

As a result of Prince Phillip's orders, 60 younger trees have been cut down at Windsor Park. Protesters tried to stop the destruction, but workers out manoeuvred them and felled tree's at the far end of the park. Protesters have stopped the workers from tidying up and the remains serve as a constant reminder to visitors of this immense destruction. Ironically Prince Philip is president of the WWF and has committed a string of indiscretions. Campaign for his resignation! The Crown Estate have 'promised' not to cut down any more trees until they've reconsidered the project. They must now meet the Borough Councillors - who are against the felling - before a final decision is made.

There are many trees left to defend including ancient oaks. Get the last Tree sitters are in Queen Anne's drive, off A332 Kings road from Windsor towards Ascot. They're on the left as you leave Windsor and enter The Great Park. Call 0421 518699 or 01635 521770.

CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE ARMS TRADE

Protesters from the Campaign against Arms Trade staged an invasion of the Government Arms Fair, in Aldershot on Sunday September 3rd. The invasion followed a march of over 100 people through the town centre and a ceremony of remembrance with speakers from Indonesia and Kurdistan. The invasion was to draw attention to the effects of the arms trade and to the high levels of secrecy surrounding the arms fair. 26 protesters were arrested for aggravated trespass. - 2 protesters actually managed to enter the arms fayrel Most people were released without charge. CAAT has many more anti arms trade protests planned. For further info contact: CAAT, 11 Goodwin St, London, N4 3HQ. Tel: 0171 281 0297.



radios, photocopying & money. Everyone can help. There is a public meeting about the road at Ashton-under-Lyne town hall on Tuesday 24th October, 7.30 pm. There will also be a party & direct action bonanza at Hallowe'en. Info: 0161 628 4727 / 0161 627 4862.

TARZAN GETS IT BACK!

Early one Sunday in September and a motley collection of ex-miners, trade unionists and environmentalists are looking for coal with pickaxes and spades. A sleepy Deputy Prime Minister looks out of his window and sees sixty people digging up his lawn! Heselaine, the man responsible for ditching the deep mine industry, will have to fight a planning application for a mine in his back garden. This was just a preliminary visit! Now Heselaine will have to defend his land and state why he objects to the application. Whatever his words, he will be accused of NIMBYism and any arguments about intrusion, pollution, noise, dust or disruption will be widely used by Britain's 40 local anti open cast groups. After 7 hours, much digging, a picnic and a game of cricket, the protesters left. There were no arrests.

THE QUERCUS TRIBE

A harvest moon gathering took place at the protest camp on the A30 (Devon) at Fairmile on September 9th. Around 200 revellers turned up and good fun was had by all. However, work continues - people are needed to help construct tunnels which extend under the hillside at Fairmile. At Allercombe camp amazing net systems have been set up in the trees.

A book is being written to celebrate one year of the Fairmile Campaign. On October 6th, Fairmile camp celebrates its first Anniversary and mystery actions are planned for November. 01404 815729.

M65

The barn in the route of the M65 at Guide, Blackburn was demolished on the 14th September. Local farmer, Jack who owned the farm and had been barricaded in it, was met by 100 security guards. He finally agreed to come out and accept the compulsory purchase order. His supporters have pledged to continue fighting the national roads program.

How to contact Earth First! Action Update.

By phone: 01222 383363; by post: Action Update, PO Box 7, Cardiff, CF2 4XX; by fax: 01222 640666; or finally by email to: actionupdate@gn.apc.org. Articles should reach us before the 20th of the month for inclusion in next months AU! For replies please enclose a SAE. Send subscriptions/requests for bulk copies/ distribution enquiries to Dead Trees EFi. To subscribe to the free e-mail server give us your details. Please send us a donation or stamps if you can afford it (we rely on getting atleast £50 a month in donations to be able to send free subscriptions to community groups etc.)



More destruction for the M11 Link

GREENMANIA EVICTED

The Greenmania camp, in the path of the M11 link road was evicted on Tuesday, September 5th. The eviction took 10 hours, with above average police dodginess. The eviction followed a pre-emptive raid which took place the Sunday before, when they managed to fell some trees. Actions continue... For further info call: 0161 527 4896 or, 0161 518 8222.

COOLTAN ARTS

CoolTan Arts Centre is no more! They left the Old Dolehouse on September 24th, after three years of occupation. The 'Voice' newspaper, who bought the building 18 months ago plan to move in. CoolTan agreed to leave the building - to set up a new DIY centre in Brixton called 'Greenland'. After two and a half months of work into the project, 'Greenland' faced a number of setbacks. The 'Greenland' project is now on hold whilst the search is on for yet more premises...

SELLAFIELD PEACE CAMP

Helen and Kate have appeared at Warrington Magistrates, following the Risle Act on Chernobyl Day. Charged with painting the forecourt, they defended themselves using 'preventing a greater crime', - a Chernobyl style accident in the UK. They received a Conditional Discharge. There will be a 5th Birthday Camp at the end of November 24-26th. Contact: 01706 371387.

EDITORIAL

Great to see some of you at the EFi Gathering. What a beautiful place! Whitley Quarry (Dec 3/4) is set to be the action of '95. At the gathering it was decided to go for a national hit and for all EFi associated groups to try and publicise it and organise transport from their area. Please be there even if it's the only action you ever do (if you can't be there we need donations for printing/advertising as well - cheques to 'Earth First' at the AU address).

Also, AU is running at a serious loss at the moment. To get some more money in (Child Benefit still won't cough up to support us) we're offering to increase the number of subscribers we have (ie. the people who actually pay us money). We're trying a free trial issue to anyone who sends a large stamped addressed envelope to EFi AU Subs, c/o Dead Trees EFi, Box 25, 82 Colston St, Bristol, BS1 5BB. If you write a newsletter or magazine, please mention this for us.

Lastly, we've said it before, but if you're sending an article keep it short and concise (100-150 words), not pages of text. This month's disclaimer was sent to us, in response to our Thanet Way article in issue 19... **Disclaimer: GET REAL, NERD!!! If any of this is true, I'm the President of Earth First!**

SELAR FARM NATURE RESERVE

The battle against the proposed Celtic Energy Opencast Site at Cwmgrach, South Wales looks like dragging on over the winter. An eviction threat still exists under 'sole possession order' granted to Celtic Energy in May. This is in direct defiance of the Criminal Law Act of 1977. Tree sitters are still desperately needed. The biggest threat at the moment is winter itself as Selar farm is half way up a mountain, but there are plans for alternative energy creation under way. Bring heavy duty sleeping gear and any tarps/plastic sheets. Selar Farm Nature Reserve, Cwmgrach, Neath Valley, West Glamorgan. Camp tel: 0589 114899.

C.J.A.? No Way!

Nearly a year after becoming law the Criminal Justice Act is suffering problems. Specific clauses have recently been legally defeated in test cases. The eviction of a group of travellers in Sussex was overturned after the court decided that the local authority had to consider the human and welfare needs of travellers before eviction.

A man calling himself King Arthur, defeated a charge of trespassory assembly at Stonehenge. This went against his right under European law to freedom of worship.

Only 10% of arrests under the act have resulted in convictions and many police forces have chosen not to use their new powers. Worryingly the act has given the police, as opposed to magistrates, the right to set bail conditions which has resulted in people being arrested on minor charges and given excessive bail conditions including not returning to a protest site.

This first eviction of squatters was attempted in Bristol by the Church Houses Association. The 24 hour notice was overruled by the court, who extended it to 7 days.

BLOODY BARRAGE GETS BOLLOXED

Guess What! The Secretary of State for Wales has turned down proposals for a barrage similar to the one in Cardiff Bay. The £70m barrage across the River Ux at Newport was rejected last month by William Hague, on the grounds that it would damage the river and that the barrage's economic potency was flawed. The decision was welcomed, but environmental groups wondered why the Cardiff Bay Barrage is still being built. A reason could be that the Ux is one of Europe's top angling rivers. Fish stocks would be depleted with the barrage in place and surprise, surprise, this is where a few Conservative marginal seats lie.

In a shock development last month, Cardiff Bay Barrage made some drastic cuts in the budget of the Barrage - increasing the risk of flooding in Cardiff. We hate to say it, but we told you so...

ANTI-CORPORATIONS FAYRE

This year the London Greenpeace fayre is changing its emphasis and will be the Anti-Corporations Fayre. Transnational Corporations dominate the world's economy and are responsible for the exploitation of people, animals and the environment. The fayre aims to bring people together to exchange information, experiences and opinions and to plan opposition and alternatives to big business.

The fayre takes place on Saturday, October 28th, from 11am to 8pm at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1 (nearest tube Holborn). There is wheelchair access and a crèche. 0171 713 1269.

Diary Dates

Every Tuesday: weekly vigils/actions, 5-8 pm - outside French Embassy (London) Against Nuclear Testing. Youth CND: 0171 607 3616.

Every Friday: 10-11pm. Anti-nuke vigil outside French consulate in Edinburgh (11 Randolph Cres.)

OCTOBER

2nd Mon: Reclaim the Streets St. London POSTPONED

2nd Mon: National Day of Action Against the Job Seekers Allowance, Brighton. The Clocktower, 11am. 01273 671213

6th-7th: Conference on Public Transport. Wells, Somerset. 01749 880 639.

6th Fri: Action at M66. Daisy Nook Camp. 0161 628 4727.

7th Sat: Demo Against Police Brutality. 12.30pm. Hackney Downs Park, London E5.

7th Sat: Criminal Justice Act Demo, Plymouth Hoe, 1pm. 01792 229129.

7th-8th: Land Occupation, Oxford. 01865 722016.

7th-9th: ALIEN - an action to end all wars! Feslane Peace Camp. 01436 820901.

7th-13th: Eco-Villages and Sustainable Communities. 01309 673 655.

11th-15th: Green Party Conference, Southport, Lancs. 0181 882 0955.

12th Thurs: A36 Corridor Alliance, Anti-Pollution Day March, from Temple Meads, Bristol. 10.30am. 01794 322 505.

12th Thurs: Day of Solidarity with McDonald's Workers. Leaflets from Support Network: 0181 533 7111.

15th Sun: Squatting Exhibition, WECH Community Centre, Elgin Ave, Harrow Road, London W9. 0171 277 7639.

16th Mon: World Wide Day of Action Against McDonalds. 0171 713 1269.

16th Mon: Videos of Dissent at Pegasus Theatre, Magdalen Rd, E. Oxford. 7.30pm, £2.50. 0865 741682.

20th Fri: Critical Mass from Birmingham to Manchester. Meet at 'Pushbikes', Alison Street. 0121 378 5558.

21st Sat: Reclaim the Streets Party, Manchester. 1.30pm - 6pm. Meet Albert Square, City Centre. 0161 2321598 (new no.)

21st Sat: Anarchist Book Fair, Conway Hall, London.

21st-22nd: Campaign Against the Arms Trade, Student and Youth Gathering, University of Central Lancashire, Preston. 0171 281 0297.

25th-29th: A SEED Europe General Meeting, Nijmegen, the Netherlands. Tel: +31 20 6682236.

26th Thurs: M66 Demo at Ashton Magistrate's Court. 0161 628 4727.

28th Sat: Street Blockade, Bristol. Meet at Arncliffe, Princess St. City Centre, 12 noon. 01225 485856/314040.

28th Sat: Anti-Corporations Fair: 11am-8pm. Conway Hall, Red Lion Square. London. London Greenpeace 0171 713 1269.

NOVEMBER

31st Oct-5th Nov: Earth Nights. Pixies help nature strike back! 'Go out and do something for the earth, at night.'

6th-9th: Picket of 'Management Summit 95' 9am-11am. Park Lane Hotel, Piccadilly, London W1 (Hyde Park Corner tube) executives from Nestle, McDonalds etc. will be speaking. 0171 713 1269

12th Sun: 4th Anniversary of the Dili Massacre, East Timor. Actions planned. 0161 834 0295

24th-26th: Selfield Peace Camp, Winter Warming for Wild Witchy Womyn. The Fifth Birthday Camp! 01706 371387

Nov 30th-Dec 3rd: Actions at Menwith Womyn's Peace Camp. 01706 371 387

DECEMBER

3rd-4th: NATIONAL EARTH FIRST! ACTION. Shut Whitley Super Quarry, Mendips, Somerset. 01935 825 074.

7th Thurs: No Arms to Indonesia, Lobby of Parliament. 0171 281 0297

OPENCAST IN YORKSHIRE

Garforth is a town increasingly being surrounded by open cast mines. Mining work is due to start soon. The Rackwood Colliery Co. plan to speed along with the work as there are plans to build a motorway over the proposed site once it has been mined. The company are vulnerable to direct action due to the pressure of their deadline. Treehouses are blossoming in Hawk's Nest Wood. More local support is needed. Actions have occurred and civil assault cases are under way, questioning the use of 'quik klubs'. The trial is expected next year. Contact 0113 282 9365

FREE MUMIA!

Mumia Abu-Jamal is still on death row in Amerika. Protests continue around the world, we must keep up the pressure here in Britain to free Mumia and all political prisoners. Write to Mumia at: MUMIA ABU-JAMAL, No am8335, SCI Green, 1040 E Roy Furman Highway, Weynesburg, PA 15370-8090. Info on MOVE and its prisoners: Friends of MOVE, PO Box 3069, London SW9 8LU. 0181 5199228.

McLibel BACK ON TRIAL

The case is under way once again. McDonalds are admitting to more of the allegations made against them as bad publicity continues to circulate. The infamous 'What is wrong with McDonalds?' leaflets are available for £15 / 1000 call 0115958 5666. The 11th World Wide Anti Mc's Day is on October 16th - picket your local store. An appeal has also been set up to raise £35,000 in order to buy the McLibel Support Campaign court transcripts. Donations to - McLibel Support Campaign, c/o 5 Caledonian Rd, London, N19DX

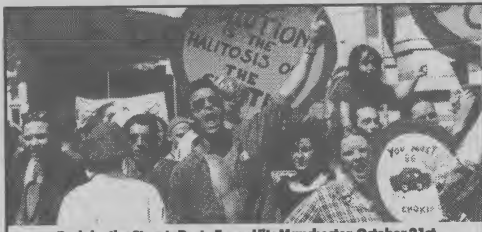
BRYNHENILYS, IN THEIR FACES

Celtic Energy, - once British Coal Opencast's project to quarry South Wales, has been spannered by squatting the Brynhenilys site. When Celtic Energy raise their heads, campaigners are there getting in their faces.

An open day was trashed. Activists (mostly local) contradicted their boast of 'benefiting' people and environment. Councillors and the headmaster of nearby Penrhos Primary School then received £1000 for allowing opencast to extend almost to the school. He's taking the piss, kids are already suffering from asthma. The point was made when protesters set up walkways in the gym! Pigs were called against those they 'serve and protect'. No arrests, more actions soon. Usual wish list, especially people.

CRITICAL PARK

Activists from Lancaster Critical Mass have found a new target! Angered at the opening last month of over 100 new car parking places, a number of cyclists and pedestrians pushed past the security guards at the opening ceremony and occupied the car park. The action was a success, with just 16 bikes they managed to seriously worry the management and mess up the mayor's speech. Other city car parks are intended for



Redeem the Streets Party Fever Hits Manchester, October 21st

regular occupations to highlight the fact that more car parks lead to more cars entering towns and cities.

FASLANE PEACE CAMP

Campaigns against the Faslane Nuclear Base in Scotland have planned a three day extravaganza from October 7th - 9th. Workshops and a party have been planned along with a direct action protest on Sunday October 8th. This is known as the ALIEN action where Zeus - part of a group of 9 alien beings orbiting the earth - will be visiting. The Town Hall will be used for the encounter! For more information and a clearer explanation of what's happening call: 01436 820901.

EARTH LIBERATION PRISONERS

The summer edition of Earth Liberation Prisoners is now available from E.L.P. c/o MSEFI Box 23, 5 High Street, Glastonbury, Somerset. It's packed with info about Earth Liberation, Animal Liberation, Anti Fascist etc. prisoners. It also includes a call to target 'New Age Fascists'. David Icke and the magazines 'Nexus' and 'Rainbow Ark' are being used by leading British fascists such as Don Martin and Mary Stanton. We cannot tolerate scum like this using the green movement to spread their ideas of racism and fascism.

THANET WAY

This is a quote from Construction News 'Kent County Council is being forced to spend more than £1 million, fencing a 12km stretch of the A299 Thanet Way after anti-roads protesters damaged plant and disrupted construction'. Last month the camp was evicted using Facelift Cranes - complain on FREEPHONE 0800 521595. There is a new camp near the original Flat Oak, in Convicts Wood.

"THIS ONE'S FOR NEWBURY"

A group of 10 people demonstrating against the governments silence over French Nuclear Testing recently managed to incorporate another demo on behalf of Newbury. Whilst outside a Tory Party meeting

in Bristol, they noticed the fire escape led directly to a meeting room where Brian Mawhinney - ex. Transport Minister responsible for the Newbury By-Pass now the Tory Party Chairman - was talking. Rushing in the fire escape, one woman threw Brian's name in his declaring, "That one's for Newbury!"

(Wo)MENWITH HILL

Kate Witham has been charged with £21,000 damage to a radome at Menwith Hill US spy station. She allegedly painted 'Peace, Truth, Justice, Freedom'. For this 'crime' she faces trial in crown court and a prison sentence of up to a year or more. Help and support is desperately needed to raise money for the defence fund. A 'sentence sweepstake' has been set up by the women to fund the campaign, 50p a guess - entries so far range from case dismissed to 25 years imprisonment! Please make cheques payable to 'Peace House'. Send to Peace House, 5 New Road, Littleborough, Lancashire, OL15 8PJ.

12 women also face trial from October 30th, regarding blockades in May. Kate and other women are available to give talks to your group. Further actions will take place from November 30th to December 3rd. This is in solidarity with Australian anti spy base protesters and the two sister bases in Australia. For more info on the National Security Agencies illegal activities at Menwith Hill, contact: 01706 371387 or 01482 443829.

ROAD ALERT!

Road Alert!, the information network for anti-road protests, are re-editing their publication, 'The Complete Anti-Road Protester'. They would love to have contributions on what should be included, articles and feedback on the last one. If you've been involved in direct action against road building then please send your suggestions to them. They also send out weekly bulletins which they will mail to any networking centre. Contact: Road Alert!, PO BOX 5544, Newbury, Berkshire. RG14 5FB.

Subscribe to the Earth First! Action Update.

Please send me the next twelve copies of the EFi Action Update. Here is my **Minimum Contribution of £4 not in cash**, cheques made payable to **Earth First!** Donations above £4, for those who can afford it, enable us to reply to enquiries and give free subscriptions to Free Information Networks, Libraries, Grassroots & Community Groups etc. Please send more if you can. Fake names are always good for a laugh (and security). Also Postal Orders are more secure than cheques. Send a S.A.E. for a trial issue if you're not sure about a full year's subscription.

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From: EFi! AU Subscriptions, c/o Dead Trees EFi!, Box 25, 82 Colston Street, Bristol, BS1 5BB.

EARTH FIRST! GATHERING

The 6th UK Earth First! Gathering was held from the 22nd to the 24th of September 1995, at Middle Wood in Lancashire. We camped by a river, miles from the nearest road in what must be one of the most beautiful places ever used for a gathering. About 70 people showed up from around England and Wales. Unfortunately, no one from any Scottish groups could make it.

Earth First! Gatherings aim to occur twice a year, bringing old and new campaigners together to share knowledge on direct action campaigns and to have a good time together.

Below is a summary of some of the workshops and discussions that occurred (The Job Seekers Allowance will be covered in more detail next month). As well as the workshops listed, people spent a lot of time just enjoying a relatively unspoilt area of countryside without worrying about it being trashed at any minute! Thanks to those few people who worked so hard to make it happen. You know who you are.

WHAT IS EARTH FIRST! ABOUT?

This was a chance for newly involved people to ask questions. They included:

What is Earth First!? - Earth First! is a network of independent groups. It does not work to an agenda. It's response is emotional - to protect the environment, mainly through direct action.
What can I do and how do I make things happen? - New people should get themselves informed of local and national campaigns. They can then go along, meet other like minded people and get actively involved. This takes time.

If you're planning to bring down industrial society, what do you plan to put in its place? - People were unclear as to what would replace capitalism and large scale industry. It was suggested that through involvement in situations of struggle to protect the earth, alternatives are being rediscovered.

TREE CLIMBING AND WALKWAYS TRAINING

Pretty obvious really - walkways are the ropes between trees that allow people to get about!

THE GREAT TRANSPORT DEBATE

The Great Transport Debate covered issues such as: is working with politicians just a waste of valuable time and effort (e.g. the Brian Mawhinney / Newbury Bypass saga); the road traffic reduction bill; and the massive cuts proposed for the road programme, which could leave some road projects like the M11 unfinished. The debate centred around the effects of out of town shopping centres - a waste of so much travel. The British Roads Federation and their associated supporters such as Weetabix and Marks and Spencers might well find themselves in the firing line for future actions.

JOB SEEKERS ALLOWANCE

The Job Seekers Allowance is to replace Unemployment Benefit and Income Support. 'Active signing' means being questioned each time you sign, on your effort to find work. Preliminary campaigns should highlight its effects on wage earners and benefit receivers - raise public awareness. If implemented, then sabotage through over participation. A 'special report' on the JSA, its implications and suggested campaigns will follow in next months AU!

LEGAL ADVICE

Solicitor Mike Schwartz was present to advise and answer questions. He covered areas such as - how to sue the police; (details in September AU); send a 1st class stamp for back issue.) He also covered what to do when arrested and the effect of the CJA. Issues arising: Legal Aid is only granted when possible compensation makes it 'worthwhile'. A second appeal for legal aid is advisable as a 'fairer' hearing is received. Despite the CJA it's best to stay silent until you see your solicitor. What you say may have further implications until you know what the defence will be. Have your solicitor 'advise you to silence'. Be aware that 'adverse inferences' may be gained from this. The judge may suggest as to how silence should be interpreted. Any doubts - on each case, be well briefed by a good solicitor.

RECLAIM THE STREETS

People from Reclaim the Streets discussed organising street party blockades. A legal presence was extremely useful as was a definite finishing time, with a party to move on to. This would help prevent confrontation when police cleared the streets. Sound systems should be escorted by a large crowd, preventing confiscation and acting as a focus. Provide food and drink for drivers stuck in the traffic along with leaflets explaining why the road is being blocked. For security reasons people should work in teams concentrating on particular aspects, so no-one knows all the details. A kids play area (eg. a beach in the road) was a positive focus, rather than smashing cars.

OUTREACH

So, how to get more people involved? There is a lot of public interest in nonviolent direct action campaigns, but few people know how to become involved. Groups need to be more accessible and the Earth First! concept to be more widely presented. Earth First! has an image problem ... losses rather than successes are publicised. Large national actions get more people involved. It was decided to target Whitley Quarry, Somerset on December 3rd/4th.

Basic self defence could be taught before actions, to understand how police use pressure points etc. People stated that more offensive actions were needed as well as defending areas. An Earth First! / direct action road show is being set up to provide information for local events people organise and to introduce people to direct action. It has no money - people with money needed!

THE FoE DEBATE

Charles Secrett, Elaine Gilligan, and Roger Higman from the central Friends of the Earth (FoE) office came along to the Earth First! Gathering to discuss links between EFi and FoE. This continued on from two meetings held previously between FoE, Greenpeace, some Earth First! groups, Road Alert and Reclaim the Streets.

FoE campaigning methods include lobbying, education, consumer campaigns and research. It is not primarily a direct action organisation. After a wet nights sleep in a leaking marquee, Charles Secrett, (the director of FoE, UK) had the opportunity to present FoE's ideas. He stated that although we may have some different objectives, there are many more important things that we share. FoE wish to help bring the environmental movement together and bring about constitutional reform. To achieve this, FoE suggested a convention - bringing together all sections of the environmental movement. FoE requested that EFi help organise the convention.

There was mixed feeling at the gathering as to whether FoE and EFi shared common ground. Although EFi and FoE groups often co-operate on local issues, some activists expressed distrust of FoE after the 'Twyford Down' experience - regarding them as having a different agenda. Some felt FoE were trying to use them as a vehicle to recruit in the 'youth market'. They argued that EFi, having no national organisation, but simply a network, has no business playing politics with FoE. While FoE are basically moderates, EFi is based on a principle of 'no compromise' and encourages radical direct action in defence of the earth. EFi is not about reform. Other EFlers were keen to develop alliances and cannot see us managing to protect the earth without unity of opposition. Pointing out that we have enough people to fight against, they expressed a need for more allies, especially coming from groups with similar objectives. Working together gives EFi a chance to radicalise FoE. Finally, it was agreed that it's up to individuals and local groups to decide how they will work in their locality. They didn't see FoE as 'Corporate Greenies' but argued that FoE local groups had autonomy. EFi informed Mr Secrett that it works better on a local level. FoE groups are welcome to work locally with EFi groups, and are especially welcome to come along to the Whitley - Shut it Down action on 3rd-4th December.

COMMENTS

'So how was it for you?' - Constructive criticisms and comments for future gatherings were obtained anonymously. Compliments on the location - the 'excellents' and 'inspiring's were too numerous to be included. Thanks for getting it together, you know who you are!
Considerations for future gatherings: 'gender workshops', 'not enough time to pick each others brains ... 3 - 4 days next time?' 'Football games - a la Swindon!' 'Gathering action ... location permitting.' 'Workshops to be facilitated.' 'More music and communal space to cater for larger numbers.' 'Child care definitely needed if children are going to fall in the river!' 'More dancing / jiggling around.' 'Access for people with limited mobility.' 'Mobile phones incase of emergency.' 'More colour and music ... not just beer and spilt.' 'Some attitudes were immature and cliquey ... one or two downright obnoxious people - esp during FoE discussion.' 'Personal responsibility - too many people leaving litter ... sort it out.' 'The odd trace of unnecessary attitude was unbelievable.' These comments refer to us all. We're not perfect, but we're getting there!

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Earth First is a network of independent groups who believe in doing just that-putting the earth first. It is based on a concept of non-hierarchical organisation, direct action, and the empowerment of individuals to confront the ecological catastrophe facing our planet. The above contacts are groups in this network. Let Earth First! Action Update know of any alterations/additions/removals from the list. Alterations from last months are shown in bold and underlined groups may no longer exist. Telephone numbers given for international contacts include UK dialling codes. Please note that the international contacts given are not "in charge" of each country's actions but simply represent a way in to their direct action network.